THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Not an Ecclesiasticism.

A

LETTER TO A SECTARIAN.

BY

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Tract takes the form of a "Letter of Remonstrance to a Member of the *soi-disant* new church," chiefly, because the controversial form of discussion is always the most favorable to the evolution of truth, truth being essentially combative: and incidentally, because this sect, though now so inconsiderable in point of numbers, may yet be able unwittingly to obscure and degrade symbols of the most universal pith and sacredness in public estimation, if it be allowed to go on unrebuked in the pertinacious identification of itself with the "New Jerusalem," or new church of the Apoc-

alypse. Respect also for the memory of a great and honest name sadly misrepresented, enters, appreciably, into the writer's motives for giving his letter its present form. The writer would be extremely sorry to pin his unquestioning faith upon Emanuel Swedenborg, or any other man of mortal mould; but no one familiar with the writings of that remarkable person can doubt, that they probably furnish the best antidote to the sectarian *virus* of any book extant, save of course the New Testament, of which overflowing reservoir they are in fact but a very ample and a very artless service-pipe.

However, the writer desires to interest a larger audience in the inquiry he prosecutes, than is to be found within any specific fold; and hopes that he will prove to have said something before he has done, acceptable to the pure and good of every denomination.

New-York, 1854.

LETTER TO A MEMBER OF THE *SOI-DISANT* NEW CHURCH.

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LETTER OF REMONSTRANCE,

ETC. ETC.

SIR :—

You and I are equally persuaded, doubtless, that a new church, which according to the tenor of ancient promise, is destined to be the crown and consummation of all past churches, is now forming in the earth ; and if we have equally reflected upon the characteristic scope and genius of this church, as depicted in the almost transparent language of prophecy, we must be equally convinced that it is full both of sympathy towards every existing form of use or goodness, and of mercy, gentleness, patience, towards every form of ignorance and unconscious error.

For, what is meant by a church, to which the voice of inspiration does not hesitate to apply the mystic name of New Jerusalem ? What is meant by a church which may truly be styled the crown and consummation of all past churches ; or what is the same thing, which shall express God's full pleasure in humanity ? Clearly it is not meant to be a mere rival or competitor to any other church. Clearly it is not meant to be a better church of the same kind as already exists. Churches of the existing sort have only dwindled ever since the

stately days of Moses and Aaron. Starting from that gorgeous prime, they have descended through the diminished pomp of the Romish ritual, and the Anglican attenuation of that, until the acme of desquamation seems at length attained in the pinched and wintry ceremonial of our own Congregationalism. And even if this sort of church should be revived, and redintegrated in its full Mosaic splendor, would it be a work worthy of God? Will the divine name be written as legibly under these skies on stone and mortar, on ephod and breastplate, as on the fleshly tablets of the busy human heart? I think not. I think indeed that a church which by dint of holding its breath, or arresting the transit of the divine influx, should swell itself to more than Papal or even Mosaic resonance, would only swell itself away from the whole divine meaning it ever contained. For the true meaning of every visible divine institution has been, to serve as a witness merely to the invisible Divine, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, much less therefore any house or polity of man's invention. Consequently any visible church, technically either "old" or "new," which should profess to constitute God's true abode on earth, would only repeat the Jewish mistake, and incur the like public contempt.

Besides, when we talk of the crown and consummation of a thing, we do not mean any rival or hostile thing on the same plane with itself; we mean some discretely higher thing, say its faculty of use or action. Thus when we talk of the crown and consummation of a plant, we mean its flower or fruit, assuredly not some other and hostile plant. In like manner the crown and consummation of an animal body is its will or faculty of

voluntary motion, not some new and rival form of animation. And the crown and consummation of the human organization is not any new and superior organization which is to supersede the old, but its faculty of virtuous activity, or the fruit of a holy life. In fact, the crown and consummation of any natural thing, is always the use it effects, is always the superb fruit it bears. Thus the crown and consummation of the mineral kingdom is not some new and precious form of mineral existence, but the vegetable form to whose development all its uses are tributary. And so in like manner the crown and consummation of the vegetable kingdom is not some rare and splendid form of vegetation, but on the contrary the animal form, to the development of which the vegetable kingdom is wholly subservient. And so again the crown and consummation of the animal kingdom is not some new and glorious form of animality, but the human form, to which all the realm of animal existence is tributary or subordinate. In all these cases we see progressive development to be the intention and method of nature. We never see her returning upon herself, or stopping short in her career to amend the work she has made, and bring out a second edition of the same performance. We see her going straight onward from the foundation of her edifice, through all its successive grades or stories to its roof and skylight, and stopping only when the faultless house stands before you radiant in beauty, and inexpugnable in strength.

Analogically therefore, when we look for a new church in the earth which is to be the crown and consummation of all past churches, we are not to look for a mere second edition of the existing ecclesiasticism: we

are not to look for a new and rival ecclesiastical organization to that of the old church; we are not to look for a new and competitive priesthood, nor for a new and competitive baptism, nor for a new and competitive eucharist. This sort of newness the church experiences *usque ad nauseam* every few years, upon the occasion of the outbirth of every new sect. No, in looking for that new church which is to be the crown and consummation of all past churches, we are to look for the incorruptible spirit of which these past churches have been only the preparatory and perishable letter, for the ripe and perfect fruit of which they have been the temporary and unconscious husks. In short we are to look for a spiritual church, which being identical with the broadest charity in the life of man, must always refuse to become identified with particular persons, particular places, or particular rituals of worship.

Such of necessity is the character of the church of Christ. It is a spiritual economy, and is therefore identical with all that is humble and tender and easy to be entreated in the soul of man. Heaven is not more distant from earth, than is sectarianism, or the desire to separate oneself from others, distant from the mind of the true churchman. Instead of saying to Calvinist or Catholic, to Methodist or Episcopalian, "Stand aside, we possess a holier priesthood than you, and put forth a more acceptable baptism and eucharist than you," the true churchman taking counsel of the divine love in his heart, says, "Draw near, my brother, and let us worship together. There is but one priesthood known on high, the priesthood of goodness, and one baptism and communion, that which unites instead of dividing the

household of faith. The two outward ordinances which we have received from the Lord's hand are uniting, not dividing ordinances; they are so divinely large as to accommodate all heavenly truth, and hence to unite in their equal embrace every true worshipper of God, in every clime, and of every name under heaven. He consequently who claims that they are adapted to symbolize only the truth he professes, or that they lend themselves more willingly to his worship than to that of other and less instructed men, virtually claims to possess all truth, and in so doing proves that he is himself an alien from the entire spirit of truth. No, my friend, let us worship together, calling upon one and the same blessed Lord and Redeemer. You possibly do not know many of the spiritual things contained within the obscurity of the literal scriptures; but all *saving knowledge is amply contained in the letter of sacred scripture, and is to be drawn exclusively from it;* and you doubtless are as sincerely zealous of the honor of the letter as I can claim to be. But even if it were otherwise, even if the common doctrine of the church were not deducible from the letter of scripture, but only from its spiritual contents, I yet know so little of those contents compared with what is to be known, that the difference between my knowledge and your ignorance in this respect sinks into absolute nought. And yet on the other hand I know so well the magnanimous and divine spirit of all that truth, thus contained invisibly to natural sight within the literal page,—I know so well the boundless love and charity with which it is all aglow, that I could never think of making any amount of superior information I possessed, a ground of glorying over

others, or a warrant for expecting a greater complacency on God's part to my worship than yours. On the contrary, the spirit of all truth is goodness, the substance of all faith is charity, and hence the more I feel the spirit of truth, the less I value all merely external and intellectual differences among men, and the more I value all cordial and vital agreement."

Now no one can doubt that this is the attitude of the true churchman. Every one in whom the church truly exists is a regenerate man, is a form of charity, and nothing can be more intolerable to such a man, than the attempt to separate him from others, or give him an ecclesiastical elevation above others. He cannot be persuaded by any amount of sophistry, or any force of clerical domination, long to falsify his fundamental instincts in this particular. He will go on to suffocate and suffer, until at length he throws off the incumbent mass of ecclesiastical pride and dotage, and emerges for ever into the lustrous air and warm sunshine of God's boundless love. The true Christian allows others to separate from him as much as they please, as much as their unfortunate narrowness makes it inevitable to them; but he feels it necessary to separate himself from no one. His mission is one of love, and therefore of fusion and unity, instead of separation or disunity. Hence although he claims the right to worship on Sundays with whomsoever he pleases, and to employ for that purpose any improved form of worship, he yet takes care to deny all ecclesiastical separation on that account from those around him, professing his steadfast allegiance to the same Lord whom they equally profess to obey. He does not attempt to construe his arrangements

for an improved social worship, into a fact of public significance, nor does he claim for what is purely conventional and transitory that public importance which is due only to what is spiritual and eternal. Hence he remains in ecclesiastical unity with the people around him, being content to enjoy unimpaired his spiritual freedom, and the freedom of external worship with whomsoever and wheresoever he pleases.

The only legitimate newness of the Christian church consists in a newness of spirit among its members, not a newness of letter. The letter of the church consists *unalterably* in its two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. A new *literal* church therefore must disown these ordinances, must exhibit new ordinances, instinct with new meaning. Clearly Swedenborg never contemplated such a church. Never once in the whole course of his writings, has he criticized the administration of the Christian ordinances, or declared it defective, save in respect to the withholding the cup from the laity in the Roman church. He waged no war whatever with the church as an ecclesiasticism, though I doubt not he had his just Protestant predilections, but only as a corrupt spiritual economy. He complained of it only in that respect wherein the Lord complains of it, namely, as being destitute of the life of charity, and being therefore to all heavenly intents and purposes dead or inactive. Accordingly you never find him proposing so cheap and superficial a remedy for so grave a disease, as the creation of a new ecclesiastical organization. How should a new ecclesiastical hierarchy mend matters? The complaint was not against a particular set of persons, as contrasted with another set. The com-

plaint was not that certain persons called God's church were worse men spiritually than certain other persons, which other persons must therefore be formed into a new ecclesiastical body, and made to supersede the old one. By no means. The complaint was that the entire mind of man, as ecclesiastically exhibited, was in spiritual ignorance or darkness, and hence the remedy befitting this condition could not be a change in the personal administration of the church, or a change in the persons composing it, but an entire renewal of its spirit. What the church wanted was not a new body, or a new literal constitution, but exclusively a new spirit, the spirit of unfeigned love.

Hence you never find Swedenborg discussing any questions of ecclesiastical polity, or urging any measures of ecclesiastical reform, except that of the administration of the eucharist in the Roman church. He thought, indeed, that from the circumstance of that church exalting a life of charity in its doctrines more than the reformed churches do, it would more easily receive the new truths than any other church, provided it would rectify its administration of the eucharist, and dismiss the worship of saints. But all this of course was matter of private opinion. You always find him treating all questions of ritual or external difference between churches as of no spiritual significance, save as contributing indeed to the greater *unity* of the church, when charity was its spiritual bond. He invariably represents the true Christian, or the man in whom charity dwells, as gratefully and reverently observing the institutions of public worship established in his nation, and on no occasion whatever does he represent him as finding these

institutions inadequate to his need. So also whenever he talks of the external of the church, he does not represent it as consisting in a Sunday ritual, or a correct liturgical form, but exclusively in goodness of life. "The church of the Lord," says he in 403 of A. Explained, "is both internal and external: the internal of the church consists of charity and faith thence derived, but *the external of the church* IS THE GOOD OF LIFE, or the WORKS of charity and faith;" that is, all those things which charity and faith operate in our social relations. Consistently with this definition, you find him throughout his writings making no ecclesiastical complaint of the church, but only a spiritual complaint, as to its destitution of charity. Thus he says the existing array of divided churches, as Catholic and Protestant, and the various subdivisions of these again, would be perfectly conformable to the divine mind, were they only animated by mutual love or charity. "THE THINGS OF DOCTRINE," he says in his *Celestial Arcana*, 1790, "DO NOT DISTINGUISH CHURCHES BEFORE THE LORD,"—that is to say, the Lord knows no difference between a church professing true doctrine and one professing false—"but this distinction is effected BY A LIFE ACCORDING TO THE THINGS OF DOCTRINE, all of which if they are true regard charity as their fundamental, for what is the end and design of doctrine but to teach how man should live? The several churches in the Christian world are doctrinally distinguished into Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists. This diversity of name arises solely from the things of doctrine, and would never have had place if the members of the church had made love to the Lord, and charity towards their neighbor, the

principal point of faith. Things of doctrine would then be only varieties of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith, which THEY WHO ARE TRUE CHRISTIANS would leave to every one to believe according to his conscience, whilst it would be the language of their hearts THAT HE IS A TRUE CHRISTIAN WHO LIVES AS A CHRISTIAN, that is, as the Lord teaches. Thus *one church would be formed out of all these diverse ones*, and all disagreements arising from mere forms of doctrine would vanish; yea, all the animosities of one against another would be dissipated, and THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD WOULD BE ESTABLISHED ON THE EARTH." Think of that, my sectarian friend. These old Christian sects whom you propose to supersede, Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran, with all their subdivisions, were they only enlivened by charity or mutual love, would present no ecclesiastical obstacle to the divine truth, but would really constitute the Lord's kingdom on earth, would constitute the true and spiritual church which is identical with that kingdom. How much wider the sympathies of this great man were, than they are represented to have been by those who make use of his name to originate a new ecclesiasticism! Let us sing a few more brief hymns to the same blessed tune, from the same general repository. "All the members of the primitive Christian church," he says, A. C. 1834, "lived one amongst another as brethren, and mutually loved each other. But in process of time charity diminished, and at length vanished away; and as charity vanished, evils succeeded, and with evils falsities also insinuated themselves, whence arose schisms and heresies. These would never have existed, if charity had

continued to live and rule: *for in such case they would not have called schism by the name of schism, nor heresy by the name of heresy*, but they would have called them doctrines agreeable to each person's particular opinion, or way of thinking, which they would have left to every one's conscience, not judging or condemning any for their opinions, provided they did not deny fundamental principles, that is, the Lord, eternal life, and the Word, and maintained nothing contrary to divine order, that is, to the commandments of the decalogue." "The false principle within the church," he says, A. C. 2351, "which favors evils of life, is that goodness or charity doth not constitute a man of the church, but that church membership is effected by truth or faith." "As man becomes internal and instructed in internal things, externals are as nothing to him, for he then knows what is sacred, namely, charity, and faith grounded therein." Again he says in A. C. 3122, "The regenerate man makes no account of the things of faith or truth;" that is, of course, holds them to be wholly subordinate to a life of charity. "Faith, in the Word, means nothing but love and charity: hence doctrines and tenets of faith are not faith but only appurtenances of it." *A. C.* 2116.

"Love to the Lord *cannot possibly be separated from love to the neighbor*, for the Lord's love is towards the whole human race, which he desires to save eternally, and to adjoin entirely to himself, so as for none of them to perish: wherefore WHOSOEVER HAS LOVE TO THE LORD, HAS THE LORD'S LOVE, and cannot help loving his neighbor."—*A. C.* 2023.

"When it is said there is no salvation in any name but that of the Lord, it means that there is salvation in

no other doctrine; that is, IN NO OTHER THING THAN MUTUAL LOVE, which is the true doctrine of faith."—*A. C.* 2009.

"The essential of worship is hearty adoration of the Lord, which does not exist save in so far as the heart be principled in charity or neighborly love. All true worship is adoration of the Lord, for the Lord is never present in external worship unless internal worship be contained in it."—*A. C.* 1150.

"Many say 'that there is no internal worship without external, when yet the truth of the case is, *that there is no external without internal.*'"—*A. C.* 1175.

"The new church is to be established only among those *who are in a life of good.*"—*A. C.* 3898.

"The church is one, notwithstanding its diversities of doctrine, when all acknowledge *charity as the essential* of the church, or, what is the same thing, when they have respect to life as the end of doctrine, that is, when they inquire HOW A MAN OF THE CHURCH LIVES, *and not so much what are his sentiments.*"—*A. C.* 3341.

"The church *must needs vary as to doctrine,* one society or one man professing one opinion, and another, another. *But as long as each lives in charity,* HE IS IN THE CHURCH AS TO LIFE, *whether he be as to doctrine or not,* and consequently, the Lord's church or kingdom is in him."—*A. C.* 3451.

"Doctrinals are not designed to direct the thoughts so much as the life, for what is their end but that a man may become what they teach him to be?"—*A. C.* 2982.

Again, in his latest work, entitled "The True Christian Religion," 784, when expressly describing the formation of the church, he says, "that this cannot be

effected in a moment, *but in proportion as the falses of the former church are removed;* and this must first take place among the clergy, and by their means among the laity."

Now, surely, this whole strain of observation is inconsistent with the notion of any just stigma attaching to the Christian church, considered as an ecclesiastical constitution, and utterly forbids the conception of the new church, therefore, as a new and militant ecclesiastical polity. No one, indeed, can read Swedenborg at all intelligently, without being convinced that the Christian ordinances of Baptism and the Holy Supper were never given by the Lord for the purpose of symbolizing a particular creed, or celebrating a certain doctrinal consensus on the part of his professed followers. They were given to be a sign or memorial of the universal spirit which, under all varieties of doctrinal and ritual observance, reigns among his followers, namely, a regenerative spirit, a spirit which proceeds upon the putting away the evils of the natural heart as sins against God, typified by baptism, and the consequent reception of goods and truths from the Lord, typified by the eucharist. These ordinances have thus a most universal scope, being addressed solely to the foreshadowing of the great facts of life in which all God's children are one, and not in the slightest degree to the foreshadowing of those minor facts of doctrine, as to which all God's children, simply because they are his children, must eternally differ. It is this universality of scope in the Christian ordinances which fits them to symbolize the new or spiritual and universal Christian church; because what this church primarily regards is the life of charity, or a spiritual

new birth in man, and the ordinances of baptism and the supper are the express images and types, are the divinely appointed signs and seals of this regenerate life. No matter how much a man may misconceive the literal text of scripture, no matter how full of absurd traditions or superstitions his ecclesiastical memory may be, so long as he professes to believe in the Lord, and avoids evils as sins, he is a perfectly proper recipient of the Christian ordinances, let them be administered where or by whom they may; as proper a recipient, let me add, and one as precious in the Lord's sight, as if, instead of his own native ignorance on these subjects, he possessed the angel Gabriel's plenary illumination. We may well feel, therefore, how merited a scorn shall one day betide any communion which excludes such a man from it in the Lord's name. We may well feel what scorn shall especially betide any corporation, which, assuming the sacred name of New Jerusalem, yet seeks to divert these divinely appointed vessels of the Lord's house aside from their benign and universal uses, to the service of its own ecclesiastical pomp and vanity.

Now, my friend, if the spirit of the new economy be as I have described it, if charity be the all of the true Christian church, the all of its life and the all of its doctrine —and I defy any one rationally to gainsay this—then it is highly incumbent on those who profess to be devoted to the interests of true Christianity, to inquire what hinders the spread of it among men. Let us proceed briefly to do this.

Now, mark! the inquiry we propose to make is not as to the obstacles which defeat the spread of true religion in the world generally. Undoubtedly the main ob-

stacle to the spread of true religion in the world, is a very prevalent indifference to the concerns of man's spiritual history and destiny, growing out of the unsanctified lusts of self-love and the love of the world. This obstacle you and I, in common with all the rest of the world, experience to the life of true religion in our souls. True religion is of so heavenly a genius, its temper is so humane, so instinct with the vital breath of charity, that it necessarily encounters the stupid antagonism of the natural heart in all of us, and is always obliged to conquer, therefore, wherever it takes possession. But this is not the point we are now to consider. It is a most interesting point, doubtless; but we have one still more interesting before us, which is this: what obstacles exist in the minds of religious people—people who are sincerely anxious to know and do the will of God—to the reception of new-church light, as that light stands disclosed in the remarkable writings of Swedenborg? This is our question. We find multitudes of tender, generous, and profoundly religious minds in all the divided Christian sects, who are consciously starving and perishing upon the slender fare which is hebdomadally served out to them; and we ask what is it which hinders these persons immediately receiving the stupendous consolations of the new and spiritual church?

Now, my friend, permit me to say that I think there can be but one answer to this inquiry, and it is, that these persons are continually taught to look upon the new church, not as a spiritual and therefore universal church, but simply as a new Christian sect, and upon the writings of Swedenborg, consequently, as the ravings of a fanatical or disordered brain. I say, these persons

are *taught* to take this view of the new church pretensions. And if you ask me how they are thus taught, I answer, by the purely ecclesiastical aspect which is given to the new church idea, by so many sincere but inconsiderate admirers of Swedenborg. The technical or self-styled new church assumes before the world simply the attitude of a new ecclesiastical organization, or a new organization for external worship, claiming a new clerical order, and a more virtuous or valid administration of the Christian ordinances than pertains to any other sect. Thus the world is led to consider the new church, not as a new and regenerate life of man, not as a life of spiritual conformity to the divine will, to be exemplified only in the broadest charity, or in every form of domestic, social, civil and religious use, but only as a new visible sect, having a local habitation and a name, and capable, therefore, of being geometrically defined and demonstrated. And, accordingly, when you go to a person whose thoughts are exercised about infinite truth and goodness, or who suffers in soul from the violence which is done to these interests by the spirit of sect—when you go to such a person and set before him the claims of the new church to his regard, he replies at once,—"Do you mean by the new church the sect that worships in such or such a place, and seeks to procure itself a name by outwardly separating itself from all other worship? Because if you mean that, I really do not see that you promise me any improvement. The persons who compose my present ecclesiastical connection are very good persons generally, very good neighbors, very good citizens; and besides all that are too modest to claim before the world any *peculiar* ecclesiastical nearness to God, as the sect

in question does. I have no fault to find with my ecclesiastical connection, consequently, at least no such fault as promises to be remedied by a mere change of connection. In short, my troubles are not at all ecclesiastical, but spiritual. One ecclesiasticism is quite as good as another to me, were the vital spirit of it only divine. What I lack in them all is, that close internal fusion or sympathy of the members, which could not fail to be felt in them all if charity were their life and not an unchastised ambition for mutual pre-eminence. How should I be helped, then, by going among the people in question? Do they not pretend to offer God a more acceptable worship than the Presbyterians or Catholics or Episcopalians? Do they not claim a new ministry? Do they accept Presbyterian or Methodist baptism? Will they allow Bishop Wainwright or Dr. Dewey to administer the Lord's supper to them? If all these things are so, will you tell me wherein this self-styled new church differs in spirit from all the older sects, unless, perhaps, in being rather more sectarian? And if it do not differ in *spirit* from the older sects, why then, of course it is nothing new under the sun, but something on the contrary—very stale, flat, and unprofitable. A new church must prove itself such by *newness of spirit, by a spirit of universal charity, a charity which shall loathe to be pre-eminent even over Pagans and Turks, let alone its fellow-Christians.* Any spirit short of this, any spirit which virtually says to sincere Christian worshippers of whatever name,—"Stand aside! we claim to offer a more acceptable worship than you!" is an extremely ancient spirit, is as ancient at least as that unhappy Pharisee we read of

in holy writ, who approached the temple of divine worship, saying, "Father, I THANK THEE that I am not as other men," &c., and who therefore went down to his house considerably disadvantaged from other men."

I say *therefore*, because if a man so mistakes the divine character as to suppose Him a respecter of persons, and to give Him thanks accordingly for private or personal favors, it is manifest that the man's worship is animated by self-love, and the divine name consequently grossly profaned. Of course it is the dictate of true religion to refer all good to the Lord, and all evil to the devil: but true religion dictates no comparisons or contrasts between ourselves and others, nor indeed does she tolerate any such comparisons, declaring them, on the contrary, utterly incompatible with her heavenly temper. When I feel disposed to thank God for greater ecclesiastical privileges than my neighbors, or what is the same thing, a nearer access to him than my neighbors enjoy; whenever, looking upon Dr. Potts or Dr. Hawks, I felicitate myself upon the knowledge of a rival priesthood superior to theirs; or whenever, looking upon the ordinances of the universal church as administered by their hands, I congratulate myself that they are more efficaciously administered elsewhere—it is no longer religion which animates me—it is no longer the blessed spirit of charity, but the accursed spirit of sect, or a temper of genuine self-love, which, if left unchecked, must issue in confirmed diabolism.

Do not misunderstand me. It is very far from my intention, because it is very far from my desire, to cast disparagement upon any institutions of social worship. It seems to me entirely proper and inevitable that

those who sympathize with each other's views of Christian doctrine, should come together at suitable times and places for social worship. Nothing could be more delightful than an assembly of this sort, when animated solely by a spirit of charity towards all other assemblies, and having nothing to gain by disparaging them in public estimation. An assembly like this, united in cordial adoration of the Divine Love, and intent only on celebrating His ineffable perfection, would stand in an attitude of the tenderest sympathy towards all other assemblies. It would never dream of impugning the truth of their worship by publishing itself as the only true church of God in New-York; but it would strive on the contrary to show them the riches of spiritual consolation which are embodied in the Christian ordinances wherever administered, and prove how every particular of their own worship is fragrant with the inward acknowledgment of divine mercy and peace. No, let us worship together in this spirit to our hearts' content, and under whatever orderly routine befits our taste. Let us have architecture, let us have music, let us have singing, let us have preaching, and the concerted voice of prayer; let us have, in short, whatever graceful and glowing forms may be deemed suitable to express a worship so cordial and therefore so cheerful, so rational and therefore so profoundly reverential, as that which is inspired by the new truths must necessarily be. All this is right and sweet and beautiful; and I can't imagine any one but a sour and surly sectarian objecting to it. No one, indeed, can object to it, unless he be disposed to deny freedom of worship altogether. Every one, on the contrary, must see that it is a suitable and decorous thing for per-

sons whose intellects are forming upon the same general class of truths, to seek each other's sympathy in public or social worship. But what every one has a right to complain of as an unsuitable and indecorous thing, is for this company thus coming together for worship to arrogate to themselves the name and authority of the Lord, in any such sense as prejudices the equal right of any other worshipping assembly to do the same thing. *I* believe very fully in the interior truths of the Scripture as they are unfolded by Swedenborg, and I instruct my family in the knowledge of those truths, so far as their tender understandings are capable of receiving them. Have I thereupon the right to say that my family worship is one whit truer or more acceptable in a heavenward way than that of my next door neighbor, who never heard of any interior sense in the Scripture, or if he has, deems it a very great snare and delusion, and steadily worships, notwithstanding, according to the plenary Presbyterian platform? Assuredly not. Shall the truth of any man's reverence and worship of the great Being who creates and redeems and preserves him, hinge upon his possessing adequate conceptions of the divine perfections, and offering a homage therefore which shall be worthy of those perfections? God help the best of us in that case! say I. For this is to place worship in a new ground entirely—no longer in a sense of the profound wants of the heart—no longer in the deep and cordial and overwhelming sense of our own deficiencies, of our own relative nothingness and vanity, and of God's boundless sufficiency—but rather in one's intellectual acquisitions, in the sentiment of possessing a superior illumination to other people.

But if I have no right to defame my neighbor's family worship on the ground of its utter unconsciousness of the new truths, if I have no right to suppose that the Lord views my family worship with more complacency than he does that of my Presbyterian neighbor; what right have I and those who socially worship with me, to suppose that He views our *social* worship with any more complacency than He does that of the Baptists, Catholics, Unitarians, Presbyterians, or Mohammedans? What right have we to claim in our social capacity, a comparative nearness to God over other societies, which we have no right to claim in our family capacities! If I myself, with all my hearty delight in the new truths, do not contribute any element to my family worship which makes it capable of disparaging my neighbor's family worship before God, do pray tell me how any fifty or five hundred of us assembling for social worship, shall contribute any element to that worship which shall have the effect to disparage any other sincere worship before God? If I have no right in my private devotions to stigmatize my neighbor's devotions as old and worthless and dead, what right have I to do so in my public worship? What right have I to advertise *my* public devotions as new and living and valid, and his by implication, as old, spiritless, and unprofitable?

Of course it is perfectly proper for people who sympathize in any particular views of divine truth, and who desire to express that sympathy in forms of social worship, to advertise their place of meeting, for the benefit of all persons interested. Or if we wish to assail the popular doctrines by means of lectures, sermons, and so forth, let us clearly advertise our intention. But let us

not put forth immodest hand-bills, informing the world that here the true church is to be found, and inferentially therefore not any where else in the city, under penalty of affronting the most intimate spirit of that church.

You may very properly say to the world, if you please, that you are about establishing, or have already established, external Christian worship in such a place on an improved basis, or with a spirit modified by new church light. But to say that any amount of such worship gives you the slightest claim to the world's recognition as the "new Jerusalem," as the grand end and achievement of all divine promise and prophecy, gives you the slightest right to arrogate to yourselves one particle of the consideration which belongs to that divine and immaculate economy, is to say what only a complete ignorance of the spirit of that economy prompts. The new church in man, is a regenerate life, a life of brotherly love or charity, a life which is no more consistent with the claim of superior ecclesiastical merit before God, than it is with that of superior moral or physical merit. I am ashamed to go before God saying that I am a better man morally than John Smith, and that I should like therefore a superior celestial position to his. Why am I thus ashamed? Because the plea insultingly implies that God is a respecter of persons, thus, that one of His creatures is less dependent upon Him than another. By what infatuation is it, then, that one is not ashamed to do ecclesiastically, that which he is thus ashamed to do personally? One is not ashamed every Sunday to claim before the world, and challenge the world's recognition of the fact, that he is ecclesiastically much nearer to God than the Catholic bishop Hughes, the Presbyterian bishop Phillips, or

the Unitarian bishop Bellows. What, I ask, is the explanation of this scandalous incongruity?

The explanation is to be sought in the prevalence of totally erroneous or sectarian views of the church. The sectarian idea of the church is, that it is primarily a visible corporation, hierarchically constituted, whose life lies in Sunday worship, and whose proper activity consists accordingly in promoting all the resources and interests of that worship. According to this conception of the church, a man is what he is, chiefly by virtue of his connection with that visible body; that visible body stands between him and God, and is the medium of the divine blessing to him, so that he may be called upon to honor it as his spiritual mother, with precisely the same propriety that he may be called upon to honor God as his spiritual Father. We find the conception every where diffused, and hear it expounded and enforced from all sorts of pulpits; but the only consistent and worthy representative of it is the Roman Catholic church. No person who holds this theory of the church, who holds the ecclesiastical conception of it, and maintains it *ex animo*, has any logical right to disclaim the paternal authority of bishop Hughes, and must either in this world or the next filially submit himself to it. He may call himself a Protestant against the church of Rome, and may protest till he is black in the face; but when he at last finds that the church of Rome is the only logical exponent of his idea of the church,—when he finds that all logic and all experience and all testimony go to substantiate her sole claim to the name of church in this view,—when, in short, it comes to the choice of the church of Rome or no church at all of that same general type or pattern;

he will infallibly swallow the nauseous medicine, I haven't a doubt.

I cannot, indeed, understand how any one who holds to the ecclesiastical conception of the church, can for an instant deny the paramount claims of the Romish hierarchy upon his allegiance. If the church of Christ possess of necessity an ecclesiastical constitution, or, what is the same thing, an inseparable external organization, based upon the distinction of clergy and laity, then the Roman Church is the only true church, because it alone permanently secures such an organization. Had the Protestant been as stoutly pushed *à tergo* as the Catholic has been pushed by him, and as he himself bids fair to be pushed in the future, he must long ere this have acknowledged that the only consistent ecclesiasticism is that of Rome. The Roman Catholic makes the church to consist wholly in the pope and his inferior clergy, just as the old theories of the State left out the people, or as the little boys when they form amateur military companies, make them to consist wholly of captains, lieutenants, and corporals. We may smile at this infantine simplicity on the part of the church, or weep over its boundless spiritual arrogance, as we please, but it affords nevertheless the only infallible recipe for the church's perpetuity, considered as an ecclesiastical institution. If we want conviction on this point, we have only to refer to the utter disorganization which the hierarchical idea, or the church considered as having an inseparable ecclesiastical organization, encounters at Protestant hands. The Protestant democratizes the idea of the church, making it to consist not of one power alone, not of the clergy simply, but of the clergy and people jointly. But this theory by com-

mixing the two orders, and leaving their respective parts wholly undefined, like a military company whose officers and privates should possess a joint authority, is destructive of all discipline, and has actually ended in the complete disorganization of the church, as an ecclesiasticism. What is your own ecclesiastical pretension in fact but a proof of this? Your own sect is a striking fruit and exemplification of the purely disorganizing tendencies of Protestantism. In the first place, a handful of laymen reared in the bosom of Protestantism, and united in nothing but a profession of faith in the remarkable writings of a very remarkable man, combine by mutually baptizing each other, to establish a new ecclesiastical organization which shall have the effect to supersede all the older organizations, and vacate alike the authority of their priesthoods and the sanctity of their sacraments. But as these persons can legitimately claim no other warrant for this new organization than their own wills; as they exhibit no divine sanctions for it in the shape of new baptisms or other sacraments distinguishing them from the old organizations; as, in short, they are only a new Christian sect to all the recognized intents and purposes of a sect, they cannot of course propagate any but sectarian offspring, and must tolerate every schism and division and heresy which may subsequently arise to rend their own bowels, and deliver them in their turn an easy prey to dissolution. Accordingly I know no sect so young that gives such unequivocal proofs of senility as your own; I know no sect so inconsiderable in point of numbers, which has already bred so many "doting questions and strifes of words." For this result I say you are indebted only to your inherent Protestantism, or the mother that

bore you. For as Protestantism was not a new church, spiritually considered, but only a new form or modification of one and the same ecclesiastical spirit, so your more limited movement exhibits no spiritual advance upon the older Protestant sects, but only a highly rational and comfortable modification of their ritual observances. Thus you have no right to glory over the Protestant sects, through which all your own ecclesiastical validity is derived; just as they have no right to glory over the Catholic church, seeing that whatsoever hierarchical virtue they possess, is but a puny rill of that once affluent but now moss-grown and dishonored fountain. Neither of you has the slightest reason for boasting over the other, save on the ground of a spiritual superiority, or a more eminent life of charity; and eminence in that life is scarcely consistent with ecclesiastical or any other sort of boasting, being identical in fact with the greatest personal humility.

Do I complain of these unhandsome quarrels, however? Do I regret the grand original fact of Protestantism? Do I regret the great subsequent facts which have marked her history, and developed her true or characteristic tendencies? God forbid! I look upon them all as facts full of blessed significance for the true church of God, for the true life of God in the soul of man. Had we not had Catholicism in the first place, or an ecclesiastical economy paramount to the civil and political *régime*, the human mind must have lacked the necessary germ or egg of the true idea of the church. We could never have conceived in that case of the divine life in man, as destined eventually to control and sanctify his civil and natural life. Had we not had Protestantism

again, we should have had no disorganization of this primary and beneficent germ, nor consequently any development of the miraculous spirit which informs it. I have indeed no doubt that the Providence which governs human affairs is altogether divine, for I see throughout all history the unswerving march of a great spiritual end or purpose, which is so high above man's thought as to find its stepping-stones alternately in his wisdom and his folly, and so high above his best affections, as to make his very vices contribute an equal furtherance with his virtues, to its final evolution.

I need not say to you that I look upon this end or purpose of the Divine Providence, as identical with that new church of which the world has so long and so reverently read in ancient prophecy, and of whose advent the roseate dawn is at length flushing the entire mental horizon of humanity; that new and everlasting church, the crown and consummation of all past churches, which is constituted solely by a regenerate life in all her members, or a heart full of love to God and love to man. It is identical with what the mystical scriptures call the New Jerusalem, meaning by that carnal symbol nothing indeed appreciable to the carnal eye, nor at all germane to the carnal heart, but a truly divine life in the soul of man. It is also called a new church, both because it is the crown and fulfilment of all past churches, and because a church in the spiritual idea invariably signifies a regenerate life in man, or the life of charity. This church is not aristocratically constituted like the Romish Church, nor yet democratically like the Protestant churches. It is not made up of clergy alone, nor of clergy and people jointly; but simply of goodness and truth in the soul of

every individual member. It is not made a church by any amount or any exactitude of ritual worship, any more than I am made a father by the number of kisses I give my children. No man can say of it lo here ! or lo there ! any more than he can limit the path of the lightning which now shines in one part of the heavens and now in the opposite. For as all her members are born of God, they can only be spiritually discerned, and hence the new church must persistently disclaim all identification with particular persons, particular times, or particular places.

Unlike the typical churches, this perfect church finds its truest abode and expression in the individual soul. The existing ecclesiastical polities, both Catholic and Protestant, stand between God and the individual man, claiming to be the medium to him of the divine blessing. The true church, on the contrary, derives its most general or associated form from the individual life of which it is composed, only from the purer individual fibres of which it is the gross aggregation. It consequently confesses a total inability to confer life, or do any thing else but receive it. There is no stone so dead, no dolt so absolute, in respect to whom this new church claims or is conscious of one jot of superiority. Because her first, second, and third estate, or her beginning, middle, and end, are unmixed dependence, and beget nothing accordingly but unmixed humility. She is only what her individual members make her ; and as they are all regenerate men, or men in whom charity rules, and self-seeking is dead, so she of course can only be a stupendous form of charity, whose life lies not in receiving, but only in communicating.

No baptisms and no sacraments give admission to

this church, but only those things which all baptisms and sacraments do but typify, namely, charity and a faith which itself is charity. All the baptisms and sacraments that ever were administered, and all the priesthoods ever consecrated, veil their servile heads before the true divine presence in the soul of the humblest of men, confessing their utter impotence to approximate their subject to that supreme bliss. Nay, more; were the Lord himself once again in finite form upon the earth, and the actual administrator of the Christian ordinances, they would still remain utterly inoperative to give the slightest approximation to his spiritual presence. For all true approximation in that direction is spiritual, depending upon the existence of neighborly love in our hearts, and a new and true church therefore will place her distinctive marks, not in the possession of any baptisms or sacraments or other carnal observances of any sort, but only in the sincere and saintly life of her votaries. It is totally impossible, if she be a true church, if she be any thing else than a spurious church, or a mere representative economy, that she can have any manifestation apart from the manifestations of charity in the daily life of her members. If charity teaches her subject to blow trumpets before him in the public streets, proclaiming that he is a regenerate man; if it teach him to invite public attention by printed handbills, whenever he seeks to celebrate the Divine Perfection by praise and prayer; if it teach him to advertise himself as God's true child, in contradistinction to others who only falsely profess to be so; if it teach him to acknowledge the divine life only in those who entertain the same theological opinions as himself, or read the same theological books:

why, then, of course, the greater church will do the same things, that is to say, will soon render the name of "new church" the synonyme of whatsoever is sectarian in temper, or vulgar and disreputable in manners. But if charity prescribe no such behavior to her votaries; if the truly regenerate man, or the man in whom charity rules, be, from the very nature of the case, the least conscious of the difference between himself and other men, and the least disposed to magnify such difference; if he be disposed to hide the shortcomings of his brother, and discover only the things that make for peace and universal unity; if he perceive in the law of God a height and depth, a length and breadth of spiritual perfection, which laughs to scorn the bare thought of merit in God's sight, and makes our truest wealth to lie in the unaffected consciousness of our utter want: why, then, of course, the new church will every where intensify these individual characteristics until she utterly sink from all identification with persons or places or rituals, and stamp herself as one only with whatsoever is pure and unsullied in human aspiration, and manly, just, and generous in human conduct.

In short, the true or final church is not in the least degree an ecclesiasticism, is not in any outward sense a hierarchical institution. Were it so, it would have existed from the beginning of the world, for the world has never been without authentic hierarchies, or true ecclesiastical institutions. I do not see what reasonable fault is to be found with either the Jewish worship, or with that of the Christian church, if they are to be replaced only by other external worship. The Jewish priests reflected, no doubt, the prevalent arrogance and selfish-

ness of the national hope, but, I presume, were otherwise a superior class of men. And the Christian priesthood, although the temptations incident to their conventional elevation have served to develope among them many of the subtler forms of evil latent in the undisciplined human heart, have yet, on the whole, been lustrous with many virtues. You will occasionally find one among them with a conscience like the hide of a rhinoceros, and a lust of dominion able to surmount the tallest star, and annex it to the bishopric of his conceit. And, what is remarkable, the smaller the sect, the plentier you find this sort of men, as if the divine Providence purposely limited a stomach so gigantic to the meagerest possible pasture. But, on the whole, what sweetness has baptized the clerical function in the past! What fortitude, what self-denial, what patience, what labor in season and out of season, have been the heritage of the great mass of these men! What stores of learning they have accumulated; what splendid additions they have made to the best literature of every land; how they have enriched the sciences by their observation and studious inquiries; how they have kept the flame of patriotism aglow; how they have encouraged the generous ambition of youth, and directed it to worthy and useful ends; how they have dignified the family altar, and cherished the purity of woman, and diffused through society the charm of honest and gentle manners: all these things must be cordially acknowledged by every one competent to speak on the question. Where would be the sense of ousting such a body of men, native, as it were, and to the manor born, inheriting a grace and dignity from their time-honored places, embalmed in the kindly reverence and

good will of the community, only for the purpose of introducing a new and undisciplined body, honest and well-intentioned, no doubt, and in many respects intellectually well qualified, but aggressive by the very necessity of their birth, contemptuous and insulting by the inseparable theory of their office?

All the world will bid God-speed to the new aspirants, provided they will honestly and modestly apply such teaching-faculty as they possess to the dissemination of original truths on the subject of man's relations to God and his fellow-man. But if they are not content with this—if they immodestly claim to be a newer and more authentic priesthood as well; if, instead of simply shedding new and grateful light on previously insoluble problems, *they seek a private end also, which is the exaltation of their own order in public regard, and to this end represent baptism and the Lord's supper to possess a different virtue, a diviner unction, under their administration than under that of the existing priesthood:* then the insulted common sense of the public will conclude that truth informed and urged by such a temper can hardly be worth a reasonable man's attention; and that if we can never attain to a *newness of spirit* in religious matters without necessitating a corresponding *newness of letter* also, the sooner we abandon all hope of spiritual progress the better, and so get well rid for ever of the interminable quarrel and fatigue.

But let us go a little deeper into the problem. Let us inquire the meaning of this great phenomenon which we call THE CHURCH; let us inquire in what sentiment of the human soul it takes its rise, and to what rational issues it inevitably points. If we thoroughly master

these inquiries, we shall have no remaining doubt as to the genius of the true church of God in heaven and on earth.

The *vis formativa* in the church, the foundation stone of all religion, is a certain sentiment in the breast of man of disproportion or disunion between him and God, between him and the Infinite. This sentiment underlies every church in history, underlies the entire religious life of the world. It has given shape to all man's distinctive hope, to all his aspiration, to all his best activity. He has the idea or inward sense of infinitude, of perfection, of a life which is not derived from without, and which is consequently above all vicissitude or perturbation, and he feels in all his bones that this is not the life which nature gives him. Hence a conflict between him and nature, between the ideal within him, and the actual without him. For man always feels himself bound to realize his ideas. To make the ideal actual, to bring forth the dim and nebulous radiance of the soul into clear bodily shape and act, is the very distinction of human life. The brute obeys only the life of the senses. Man, when he is truly man, when he is emancipated from the purely animal life to which his inherited tendencies condemn him, obeys his ideas, acts from within, from the impulse of taste, from the inspiration of Goodness. His life lies in clothing the outer world with the glory which he brings from the inner, or in making his ideal actual. Hence, when he cherishes the idea of a life higher than he yet experiences, he inevitably aspires, aims, and hopes to make it actual. Did he not so aim, aspire, and hope, he would perish. For the idea is there to be realized. It is not there merely

to mock him with its stern impossibilities; it is not there simply to taunt him with his hopeless infirmities; but, on the contrary, to educate his nascent and unsuspected powers, to stimulate his hopes, and leave him no rest until he has amply actualized it.

Man, then, has the idea of infinitude, of perfection, of a life infinitely superior to that which nature gives him. And hence, the beginnings of the church in him, the beginnings of his religious life, or of his attempts to conciliate the Infinite, involve a conflict between him and nature. Nature gives him a life underived from within, derived from past ancestry,—a life depending on a myriad external things, and hence subject to a myriad pains, disquiets, and disappointments. His soul whispers to him of a higher life than this, the life of God, a life which flows wholly from within the subject, depending upon no outward circumstances whatever, controlling all outward circumstances in fact, and subject therefore to no pain, no disquiet, and no meanness for ever. By all the attraction of the latter life over the former, he aspires to placate it, to draw it nearer to him, to win its blessedness. And he knows no way so direct, so full of influence towards this end, as the denial of the natural life, or the persistent mortification of its desires, ambitions, and splendors. This life, he says practically, which I derive from nature, shall not be my life. I hate it, I abhor it, I banish it. I know of a serener, of a freer, of a higher life than this, and all my instincts bid me crave it. Hence I will kill this mortal natural life within me. It may for long years yet invest my body, but my soul shall have no participation with it. My soul shall mourn in its joys and rejoice in its sorrows, if so be that I may thus get deliverance from it.

Hence it is that you see the church throughout history disclaiming any natural basis, built upon the practical denial of nature. Hence it is that you see the religious life, under whatever skies it may flower, involve more or less of asceticism. This makes the unity of all churches, Pagan and Christian, Jew and Gentile, that they all declare man to be separated from God by nature, and not connected with Him. They all affirm the necessity of regeneration. They all say, of course not in the same, but equivalent terms, Ye must be born again before ye shall see the kingdom of God. Accordingly, in the earlier and ruder stages of human history, you find the eminent parts of divine worship to consist in sacrifices and offerings, the sacrifice or offering up to the Deity of some natural possession greatly prized by the worshipper. . The dumb instinct of a paramount *spiritual* unity between God and man, led the latter to cast incessant dishonor upon his natural affections, which were felt somehow to obscure that higher bond. Hence it was common, in some regions, for the parent to sacrifice his child as his dearest natural possession. In others, the most shocking mutilations and lacerations of the body have been practised. In others, the most beautiful virgins in the community were sacrificed. In others again, the lower sacrifices of animals took place, and, as it was believed that the costlier the sacrifice the more grateful it was to the gods, so hecatombs, or an offering of a hundred bulls at once, came into vogue. On all sides the Deity was felt to antagonize the merely natural man, and every curious and cunning effort was made, therefore, to anticipate his will by the voluntary mortification of natural desire.

You have heard, no doubt, of the famous ring of Polycrates, king of Samos, which being thrown by him into the sea with a view to propitiate the divine friendship, came back to him in the belly of a fish. The letter of his friend Amasis, king of Egypt, which had induced him to sacrifice the ring, is worth quoting. "Amasis says thus to Polycrates. It is pleasant to hear that one's friend prospers, yet your exceeding good fortune pleases me not, knowing as I do that the Deity is a jealous being; and I could wish that both myself and those I love should be fortunate in some of their doings, and in others miscarry, and so pass their lives in changes of fortune, rather than be always fortunate; for I never yet heard talk of any one who with good fortune in every thing, did not come to his end miserably with an utter downfall. Do you therefore follow my advice, and in respect of your happy chances do as I tell you. Look out well for the most precious thing you have, and that which you would most take to heart the loss of; and then away with it in such sort that it shall never more come before the eyes of men. And if after this, your success should not take turns, and go evenly with your mishaps, still remedy the matter in the way here proposed." *Herodotus*, III. 40. Hereupon Polycrates threw his ring which he valued very highly into the sea, and when Amasis learned that it had been restored to him by a fish, he at once renounced the friendship of a man so clearly marked out for misfortune.

In reading this touching letter of Amasis, king of Egypt, one fancies that he is listening to a strain of modern piety, so exactly akin is the true religious instinct in all time and all space. It was never better

illustrated than in this document of long mummied royalty. Its starting point or inspiration is the conviction of God's dissatisfaction with the merely natural life, and its method of conciliation is as Amasis describes it, assiduously "to seek out the most precious thing one has, the possession dearest to one's heart, and then away with it in such sort that it shall never come before the eyes of men." Thus the Roman Catholic ascetic under the fervent inspiration of this temper betakes himself to convents and nunneries, and under its ordinary exhibitions to fasting and penance. And the Protestant ascetic under the same influence devotes himself to the ministry or the missionary enterprise, and persistently denies himself the delights of music and the dance. The opera is a snare to him, and the theatre little short of certain destruction. Ritually of course or in their ecclesiastic practice, both the Catholic and Protestant ascetic differ very widely from the Pagan worshipper. But they are all very closely allied in spirit, since they all alike aim to please God by an incessant depletion of the flesh, or an incessant mortification of natural desire.

Such then is the universal attitude of the church of God throughout the past, an attitude of aversion towards the joys of the merely natural life. Such is the invariable aspect of the religious sentiment, ere it has degenerated as among us into sentimentality and cant, an aspect of patient and profound self-sacrifice as to all the things men naturally covet. Churches may exhibit *inter se* the greatest possible ritual and political diversity, but none of them has any claim to be considered a church unless it be baptized with this spirit. This is the reason, independently of its denial of the Lord's divinity, why

the Unitarian church gets so little uncultivated recognition, and impresses so slightly the popular imagination. Its theory of Christianity softens the depravity of human nature, which depravity to the popular mind is the necessary antithesis of the divine magnanimity, and the very nucleus therefore of gospel consolation. Hence Unitarianism never gets beyond the respectable classes. Even where it conquers the bedroom and parlor floors, it leaves the attics and kitchen all the more obstinately Baptist and Methodist. It is a good profession for those in whom culture and prosperous circumstances have somewhat overlaid the natural discrepancy between flesh and spirit, or self-love and brotherly love, so enforcing a milder and more decorous doctrine upon that subject. But evidently the chief historic praise of Unitarianism is negative, consisting in its destructive criticism of some Calvinistic errors, and in its still farther *toning-down* the prevalent ecclesiastical idea of the church, and so preparing the way for the recognition of the Lord's spiritual advent.

From this survey, then, it is evident that the constituent principle of the church is the conviction of the inadequacy of the merely natural life of man to attract the divine complacency. The obvious sentiment which underlies all man's religious life, is that of a total disproportion between God and himself considered as the subject of nature. Human nature universally confesses a conscience of sin, and hence regeneration becomes the prime necessity and aspiration of the religious profession. These two words, a conscience of sin, and an ardent desire for a new birth—sum up the entire ecclesiastical development of the race. The church has begotten and main-

tained only these connected convictions, and consequently when you ask it for any distinctive life, for any life which shall confess the operation of its own peculiar spirit, it consistently refers you on the one hand to the tears of humble penitence, and on the other to the anticipations of cheerful faith. It disclaims all present vital satisfactions. It is content to transact a ritual or forensic approximation to God through the periodical ministrations of its clergy, and patiently postpones the direct realization of its faith and hope to a *post-mortem* existence, or the dawn of the soul's to-morrow.

Now, the great service which Swedenborg has rendered the intellect, is in brief this: that he has penetrated the darkness which overlay the origin of the religious instinct, and proved that all its croppings out, so to speak, in the forms of penitential worship, are so many effects of strictly intelligible spiritual causes. That is to say, he has proved that all the facts of man's ascetic experience, all the facts of his properly ecclesiastical conscience, all those facts which imply God's physical exterioration to man, belong to the infancy of the soul's life, and bear therefore the same relation to its maturity, as the rude and gnarled trunk of a tree bears to its exquisite blossom and tender fruit. Let me make this clear.

The soul, according to Swedenborg, is an organic or substantial existence in human form. It is, indeed, a much more substantial or real existence than the body, because its substance is the Divine Love which alone is creative. The Divine Love is not the attribute or quality of a material subject. God is not a finite, physical subject, of whom we properly say, as we say of ourselves,

that He *feels an emotion* of love. He is Love. His *existence* is not first given, and then His *character* or personality. He is not first a passive existence, as we are, and only afterwards and upon occasion a characteristic and active subject of that existence. He has no nature apart from His personality, like you and I have. His personality absorbs his nature. He is personality itself, thus essentially active, or active *in se*, instead of obeying an outward motive. In short, the Divine Love is not emotional, but creative, and hence His operation, or going forth, is not arbitrary, wilful, irrational, but on the contrary strictly rational and formative, proceeding from ends by means to effects. It is exerted only in creating subjects or forms receptive of itself, and hence its procession is invariably from within to without, and not the contrary: it is not like the power of a carpenter or sculptor modifying pre-existing materials, and proceeding therefore from the circumference to the centre of his work: it resembles rather the phenomenon of natural growth, which proceeds upon the liberation under suitable conditions of an invisible spiritual germ, and its subsequent orderly expansion into root and stem, branch and leaf, flower and fruit. In short, the divine power is the power primarily of an inward and spiritual life, and only in strict subordination to this the power of an outward and natural one.

God is a spirit, and his creation therefore must be primarily spiritual. He is essential Love and Wisdom, and His creatures therefore must be as to their essence, derivative forms of love and wisdom. But one cannot be *born* spiritual: he can only *become* so. I am not made loving and wise by virtue of my natural generation, but

by virtue of culture, or the patient subjection of my outward life to the inspirations of interior goodness and truth. Hence time and space become necessary elements of the creature's self-consciousness. *His spiritual evolution exacts an external or inferior field of existence*, by means of which this culture or self-discipline may take place; *and Nature, or the world of time and space, is the fruit of this exaction.* Accordingly while the mind is under the dominion of Nature, and supposes the laws of time and space to be absolute, man is in a state of spiritual infancy, incapable of forming a single right conception on the subject of the Divine existence and character. This is not the place to trace the historic steps by which the mind of man, through the gradual preponderance of self-love over charity, lapses under this dominion of nature. We are here only concerned with the fact of the lapse, in order to show how necessarily all the subsequent judgments of the mind, in regard to God and His relations to us, become colored by it. I simply take the fact of such lapse, then, as indubitable by every one who has duly estimated the subject, and I say that so long as it remains fully pronounced, that is, so long as the mind looks upon the laws of physical existence, or the laws of time and space, as absolute, it necessarily regards them as essential to all existence, and consequently to the Divine. Conceiving of himself as a purely physical existence, and at the same time perceiving a life or being superior to, and creative of, himself, man instinctively invests this superior being with an excess of physical attributes, by intensifying in its favor the only elements of existence known to himself under the names of time and space. Man himself occupies seventy years

more or less of time, and six feet more or less of space; his Creator, therefore, being so superior, must occupy a great deal more of both: yea, being perfect, He must occupy all time and all space, and so be avouched eternal and infinite.

Of course, then, in the soul's infancy, the Divine Perfection is exclusively material, being identical with the utmost possible amount of time and space. And equally, of course, therefore, in this state of things, when spiritual love and light in the soul are so completely overlaid by natural love and light, the more devout one is, or the more he acknowledges the Divine, the greater must be his conviction of the disproportion between God and himself. Man's affections and intelligence are completely dominated by the things of space and time, turning him in fact into a mere form of self-love; but as, in this state of ignorance, he necessarily attributes to God an infinitely greater subjection to the same laws, so consequently God becomes to the carnal imagination a huge overshadowing form of self-seeking, intent upon His creatures' incessant diminution. Hence, I repeat, the profounder one's conviction of the Divine existence is at this period, and the profounder his conviction of his own dependence, the deeper will be his sense of their irreconcilable antagonism, and the more he will strive to hide the implacable enmity of his heart under the proffer of a servile and interested devotion.

Such being the attitude of the purely natural mind towards God, it is very easy to see how the peculiar ecclesiastical development of humanity comes about. Man looks upon God only as a larger self, or as a great corporeal existence, full of superfluous and ebullient self-

love, and capable, therefore, of very mischievous determinations towards His insignificant creatures. It necessarily follows from this that every true revelation of God to the natural mind, every revelation of Himself at all adapted to popular credence, must consult these carnal conceptions, and wear an extremely accommodated aspect. The final elevation of the mind out of nature depends upon this merciful descent and accommodation of Divine Truth to carnal conditions. Hence you find God's name or glory in the earlier stages of history associated with some exclusive people, and His worship made purely sensuous, or at best merely *representative* of spiritual things. This people may be a capital type or figure of the true or spiritual people; but if they pretend to be any thing more, if they pretend to fulfil the spirit as well as the letter of the Divine promise, they become an insufferable stench in the nostrils, compared with which Gentiledom were sweet and vernal. A spiritual tie with minds so carnal must of course be preposterous, and hence the Deity *is always revealed as in eminent spiritual hostility, as in the most pointed private antagonism and quarrel, with the very people upon whom His name is publicly written.* God is exclusively spiritual, being essential Love and Wisdom, and therefore He incessantly repugns physical attributes, seeking to elevate His creature to more spiritual conceptions. But this can be done only in the most gradual manner, only in so far as the creature himself, by virtue of the discipline to which he subjects the principle of self-love in his bosom, regains his primal *status*, or becomes spiritually pronounced by becoming a form of brotherly love, or charity, and thus learns to conceive of God no longer as a huge

physical and passive existence, but as the sum of spiritual and active perfection, as the perfection of character or personality, in short, as perfect Man. Meanwhile, therefore, God can consent to place His name upon any special people only with a view to the utter abasement of its pride or carnal righteousness, only with a view to demonstrate, by the contrast of its proper vileness, the character of the true and spiritual worship He craves. Hence, I repeat that you will always find God revealed as in intimate spiritual hostility to every church or people with whom his name is outwardly identified. The total pith and authenticity of every divine institution upon earth, stands in its purely insubstantial or promissory character,—stands in its being a figure or emblem of diviner things to come. For abundant illustration on this point read the history of God's "chosen people" in the Old Testament, and observe how, when Jesus came offering a full and direct revelation of the Divine Spirit, he provoked the measureless scorn of that deluded and self-righteous people. In fact, as we very well know, he was obliged to hide the pure spirituality of his mission even from his own kindly but unintelligent followers, was obliged to wrap it up in apologue and parable and mystic action, and finally bequeathe it to the world's memory in the disguise of two ceremonial rites, baptism and the eucharist, under penalty of having it utterly obliterated and forgotten.

Had it not been accordingly for these two carnal ordinances, snatched by the Lord's hand from the wreck of the Jewish worship, and modified into symbols or memorials of His own blessed spirit, the church of Christ, that great multitude in earth and heaven ransomed from

sin and death by his majestic suffering, could have had no embodiment in nature, no material basis of existence, and hence could never have come to spiritual consciousness. For as nature is the seminary of the spiritual world; as no conscious spiritual existence takes place without a previous natural germination; so, consequently, had it not been for this provisional and symbolical embodiment of the church afforded by the two rites in question, it must have utterly lacked all natural body or germ, must have remained for ever unincarnate, for the simple reason that the spirit of Christ was so infinitely above that of his followers, that its only true incarnation in the fruits of a regenerate life, or the works of charity, was absolutely impossible. Such is the entire philosophy of religion considered as a *cultus*, and not as a life; such the sole justification of the church regarded as an ecclesiasticism, and not as a living society or fellowship.

Swedenborg's whole labor, accordingly, is virtually given to the extrication of the Divine spirit, which is latent in these carnal ordinances of the Christian church. He shows that they are utterly worthless save for their spiritual contents, and vindicates their existence and use only on the ground of this mystic significance. The spirit of Christ was Divine and Infinite Love. Now this spirit becomes possible to finite man only through the humiliation of his natural lusts, only in so far as he puts away evils of life from a sentiment of reverence towards God or Infinite Goodness. He may put away these evils apparently, that is, in obedience to merely prudential motives, motives of outward profit and loss, but all this does not invite the Divine Spirit. To put away one's evils truly, one must put them away from an interior motive,

or a sentiment of their contrariety to Supreme and Infinite Goodness; and just in proportion as one does this, the Divine spirit, the spirit of Infinite Love, flows into him interiorly, and builds him up into a living and miraculous tabernacle, immortally adequate and pliant to the Divine inhabitation.

But who was there at Christ's day to comprehend or receive these truths? How totally averse were they to the entire strain of the Jewish mind! And how little prepared the Gentile mind also was for their entertainment, may be augured from the fact that Christ's professed followers had scarcely got standing-room in Gentile tolerance, before they began to give his mission a palpably secular determination, and merged the glimmer of spiritual promise it exerted in the lust of a mere earthly dominion. Indeed, for that matter, we may say, how few minds are even now prepared to receive these high spiritual verities! You will doubtless find numbers of very amiable people professing to be "converted," and able, moreover, to put their fingers on the time and place of its transaction; but how rarely do we find our men of intellect living in the habitual acknowledgment of the Divine name, or putting away their native evils from any other than worldly ends! The pride of intellect says, "Be ye yourselves as gods, determining good and evil;" and in missing humility consequently we miss all true exaltation. The house that towers highest towards the skies must first go down the deepest in the earth; and the life that lays the surest hold on heaven, is that which has the most honestly subjugated hell.

If, therefore, the mind of man be still so carnal and stupid, how was it possible for the Lord to have com-

municated the grand mystery of the spiritual birth, at that early day, in any other than a figurative or symbolic manner? Clearly the thing was impossible, without fatally disgusting even the most adhesive of his few and perplexed disciples. Either the great arcanum must have remained wholly untaught, the very effort being abandoned; or else it must be taught in accommodation to the mental stature of the race, that is, carnally or figuratively. Accordingly, Christ instituted the two rites of baptism and the supper, one symbolizing the negative or initiatory side of the regenerative process, the other the positive and consummate side of it. Baptism was designed as a sign or memorial of the elimination or putting away of natural evils requisite in spiritual regeneration; and the eucharist, or the mystical feeding on the body and blood of the Lord, as a sign or memorial of the influx of Divine goodness and truth consequent upon such elimination. They were both alike mere signs of this regenerative process, mere *memorials* of it, destined to survive until his mystical second coming; that is, until he should come in the power of his Spirit, to claim the spiritual allegiance of his worshipper, or, what is the same thing, take possession of his heart and understanding.

Now, what must we say of a self-styled new church which, in face of all these palpable facts, and while avowedly acknowledging the spiritual advent of the Christ, does not hesitate to grasp these literal symbols or memorials of his truth, and convert them into its inseparable and eternal substance? Why, we can only say with the Apostle, "that he is not a Jew who is so outwardly, and that circumcision is truly not of the letter, but of the spirit." The sole glory of the Christian sacraments lies not in

themselves, but in their spiritual significance. When, therefore, that thing which these sacraments signify is, by your own avowal, come, why seek to *re-enact* the accomplished symbol? Especially, why should you claim a *more* authentic hold upon the symbol, than they who deny the Lord's second or spiritual advent, and who, therefore, very pertinently cherish his appointed memorials? If your hold upon these ordinances be really more authentic than that of the Episcopalian and Baptist, it can only be because your relation to Christ is more carnal and sensuous than theirs. These ordinances were intended only for the carnal mind, or those who had no spiritual apprehension of the Divine Truth; and if, therefore, your administration of them exhibit any special fitness, it must lie wholly in your spiritual inferiority to the older sects.

But the whole pretension is unfounded. A memorial is of value only during the absence of the memorialist. When he returns to us, and exhibits every day and hour the love of his unveiled heart, the memorial grows instantly wan and faded, and falls of necessity into disuse. How sinister a compliment should we seem to pay to his friendship, if we persisted in cherishing a gift after the giver had made himself wholly ours! He would say, "Clearly, the gift has been prized not for my sake purely, but for some private end; otherwise its value would cease by my reappearance." It was so with the Christian ordinances. Their worth was inestimable during the long spiritual night which invested the church from the time of the apostles to the splendid Pentecost of the last century; for they served, as Swedenborg says, to secure an orderly spiritual connection for their subject, and protect

him from the incursion of heterogeneous influences. But since that great Pentecost, since the passing away of those old heavens and the formation of new, and the consequent immediate intercourse of the Lord with man in nature, to what ecclesiastical end can these ordinances minister? The truths of the new heaven are internal and universal truths, as intelligible and acceptable to the Turk as to the Englishman; they are spiritual truths, as applicable, therefore, to the conscience of the Hottentot and Laplander as to the Frenchman or American. Accordingly, the new heavens, as Swedenborg reports them, are made up of Gentiles and Christians alike; and hence mere ecclesiastical Christianity, Christianity which stands in orthodox ritual observances, has utterly lost all celestial validity. A man may be, as to his ecclesiastical merits, a stanch Roman Catholic, or a stanch Presbyterian, or a stanch "New-churchman," and bear every infallible ear-mark of these several persuasions; but, however various the form of these men, it is evident that their spirit is one, the spirit of separatism or sect, and this spirit must necessarily exclude them all alike from the new heavens. The only spirit which qualifies one for admission to that harmonious company, is the spirit of mutual love or charity; and where this spirit does not exist, the new heavens are not only invisible, they are also incredible. If you doubt this, go and introduce the subject of the new heavens, the heavens to which charity alone gives admission, to the learned attention of any one in whom the ecclesiastical spirit prevails, and you will infallibly "hear things easy to be understood." No doubt, sectarians of every complexion will always find false heavens of every name, new and old, suitable to

their exact temper; but the truth of the angelic heavens is no more prejudiced by the number of spurious ones, than is the worth of bullion prejudiced by the existence of any amount of brass and tinsel.

But I must draw to a close. No observant person can doubt that what is ordinarily called Infidelity is rapidly on the increase in this country, and that it is chiefly fed by the immigration from Continental Europe. Religion has been so much identified with the secular power in European countries, the church has been so pliant a tool of the state, that the popular mind, in reacting against the tyranny of the one, unhappily finds itself arrayed in equal hostility also to the other. We seem destined to reap some of the fruits of this reaction. Multitudes annually resort to these hospitable shores for a livelihood, who cherish a resolute contempt for the name of religion, and will naturally do all in their power, legally, to diffuse such contempt. In this state of things, what is the remedy? We have no *political* remedy, of course, since our Constitution allows the utmost freedom of opinion and speech. Indeed, the separation between the civil and ecclesiastical power is our national distinction. It constitutes the legitimate boast of the American church, that it disclaims the alliance of the secular power, or refuses to protect itself by civil penalties. Hence our only reliance against the encroachments of infidelity, must necessarily be in the divine truth of our religion itself, and the clearer exhibition of its spirit in our own lives. Religion is the affirmation of a higher life for man than that derived from nature—a life of growing conformity to infinite goodness and truth. All good men necessarily therefore enrol themselves on its side, as

feeling the very life of their souls bound up with its prosperity. The effect of every conflict, accordingly, between religion and infidelity, must be to bring good men of every name into clearly pronounced union, and reciprocal knowledge and appreciation.

Religious wars are over, doubtless—at least in this land. For where no special ecclesiasticism is tolerated by the state, every possible *casus belli* is averted by anticipation. The only warfare here legitimated is that of opinion, which sheds no blood, and leaves no scars save upon the intolerant, or those who deserve to bear them. A man's opinions, when they are freely formed, are expressive of his will or his vital attitude towards eternal Goodness. If, accordingly, he cherish an opposite opinion to mine in regard to religion or any other interest, it does not become me to blame him for so doing, but on the contrary, to insist upon his entire freedom in the premises. Blame is called for only when his *action* grows disorderly and hostile to society. The best definition of religion ever given, is that which makes it to consist in loving God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. I am sure that no man fit for the society of men, can seriously quarrel with religion thus avouched. If he does, it must be at the deliberate compromise of his own character, in confessing himself indifferent to every humane aspiration. Would any one feel disposed to resort to legal penalties against such a person? On the contrary, would not one feel the sincerest pity for him, and cheerfully do his best to soothe and placate him?

Thus, infidelity will not be able to assail religion itself, without infinitely discrediting its own aims. What will

it be compelled to do, therefore, by way of keeping itself alive? It will assail certain accidental peculiarities now attaching to the religious profession, certain Romish, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, or Methodistic features, nowise belonging to the divine form itself, yet able, very often, to do her discredit in the eyes of the thoughtless. An insincere profession, a worldly temper, Pharisaic scrupulosity, superstitious regard for ceremonial observances, unreasonable dogmas, and what not, are sure to show themselves wherever a sectarian spirit exists, and it is a blessed infidelity which shall help us to correct such abuses. The more you strip religion of its purely ecclesiastical and deciduous features, or, what is the same thing, the more you identify her with the spirit of mutual and universal love which unites the men of all sects together, the more you bring her essential and eternal beauty into relief. When I am assured that my looks are not so captivating as my neighbor's, and my manners not near so graceful as they might be, I then identify myself all the more gladly with the harmless spirit within both looks and manners—a spirit which gives to looks and manners in any case, indeed, all their honest and permanent charm. So, when we convince the ecclesiastic that he has paid too much deference "to the mint, anise, and cummin" interest of religion, he will be sure, out of pure contrition for his folly, to cling all the more resolutely to the weightier interests of judgment and mercy which are its vital self.

Here, then, we discover the remedy against infidelity, and perceive it to consist in the revival of pure and undefiled religion. We shall stop the mouth of the infidel, not by argument, but by exhibiting more and more of the

spirit of true religion, and less and less of the spirit of Romanism, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Methodism, and New-churchism. There is no sadder sight to every good man than a *mere* Romanist, or a *mere* Episcopalian, or a *mere* ecclesiastic of any name. One feels how hard it must be for the poor human soul that deliberately buries itself under that rubbish, ever again to reach the upper air, and breathe the heavenly breath of charity. Every truly religious man in every sect feels alike on this point. Every instructed person perceives that the ecclesiastical temper is totally out of place in this country, because our polity resolutely ignores all ecclesiastical form, committing this subject to the purely private judgment of the people. Hence it is that a man is invariably felt to cut such a sorry figure among us, when he talks loudly about the church! the church!—meaning by that word some meagre and arrogant Romanism or Episcopacy or New-churchism, instead of the great brotherhood of those who, under whatever name, cultivate the spirit of Christ—a spirit of perfect love, because of perfect humility.

People of this sort may well dread the advance of infidelity. It is certain to ingulf them. It is, indeed, directly aimed at their destruction. The man who uses the doctrine of Christ only for the purpose of separating and dividing those who are in spiritual unity, belongs in heart to the infidel camp, and will finally enrol his name there. But to the Christian without guile, to the man who esteems charity above knowledge, and brotherly love before self-love, infidelity presents no terrors. He knows very well that every man of like temper with himself must remain for ever unseduced by its chatter, and that

for all others, or for those who exalt knowledge above charity, faith above love, it is of small consequence what name they go by. They will be very sure never to go by an unfashionable one, whether it be Christian or Infidel. How many persons are there in every sect, who are by no means *of* the sect, but who believe substantially in the views here set forth—men who hide their Romanism, and their Episcopacy, and their Methodism, away from the Divine eye as zealously as they would hide any other carnal vanity, and rejoice only in the spirit of mutual love which is the badge of Christian discipleship!

Is it too much to hope that persons of this stamp in all the sects may be coming into closer reciprocal knowledge, and that ere long they may be brought into open and joyous communion? I think not. But, at all events, I am sure that until that consummation ensue, we shall have no formal *cultus* befitting these high spiritual latitudes, nor any church consequently which has the least right to be above fear as to what man can do unto it. Man can destroy, and will destroy, every church which lives by the allegation of a superior divine sanction to that possessed by other churches. On this point, the very citadel and centre of his freedom, man will tolerate nonsense no longer. He will cheerfully promote the welfare of all the sects, because they all express a lawful latitude of human opinion in regard to divine things, and guarantee the soul consequently against stagnation and death. Their accordant existence, moreover, tends not only to adorn the outward life of the community, by the varied impulse they give the arts, but to develope also its inward life by the constant occasions they afford to the exercise of charity or mutual love. But for this very

reason society will no longer tolerate sectarian discords. The harmony of the sects is so full of social advantage, that it would be suicidal in society to permit the slightest infringement of it on any side. In fact, the development of the true or spiritual church of Christ, is absolutely contingent upon the rigid social equality of the sects. Nor, indeed, is there any likelihood of any of them so far forgetting their own interest, as to attempt transcending this equality, unless it be the Roman Catholic. The Latin poet has said, *Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*, and the theory of the Roman church undoubtedly obliges it to aspire after universal dominion. It is the only church, except the Mormon, which lays its sacrilegious hand upon *the soul* of its subject, and binds him to its will in this world by claiming an absolute power over the destinies of his spirit. All the other churches claim a strictly *accordant* relation with the state. The Romish church alone claims a *paramount* relation, and hence it will very well bear to be very well looked after by every one who has the state's welfare at heart. The Pope may doubtless continue to send his swarming legions over, and scatter the trinkets of his official vassalage with a profuse hand; he or his subordinates may timidly begin to test the public tolerance by foolish and aggressive prayers in the public newspapers for the "conversion of the United States" to Popery, or by pompous and puerile ecclesiastical processions in our public thoroughfares, without ruffling the popular indifference one feather. But let them not misconstrue that indifference to the extent of provoking any public recognition of their hierarchical claims. Let them not seek to compass ever so covertly any political ratifi-

cation of their ecclesiastical supremacy, or their very existence as a church will be instantly jeoparded. Beaten and prostrate on her own arena, and in the very noontide of her pride and vigor, the Catholic church has doubtless a claim to pass the serene and unperturbed evening of her days in these tolerant climes; but of course so long as she consents, like all her sister sects, to eat the bread of political hospitality merely, and does not claim to be the mistress of the feast. It cannot be necessary in the nature of things to fight the same battle twice over, and it is too entirely ridiculous that this virgin hemisphere should be expected to inherit the quarrels of the older one, or exhibit the slightest solicitude for the lapsed estate of this dowager ecclesiasticism.

After what has gone before, you will not be surprised to hear me say, that I look upon the revival of what may be called "the church sentiment" in these days, as of very precious augury. All that is to be desired in addition is, that the sentiment be somewhat better instructed by means of an enlargement of the popular conception of the church. One daily meets with tender, humane, and noble persons, who are heart-sick of the miserable scepticism which dogs our current literature and theology, and who would gladly do any thing that should promise to bring back a devout and believing spirit to society. For every person, in fact, who has begun to feel the faintest glimmer of spiritual day-dawn in his soul, knows that without faith in God, human life is devoid of all dignity and charm, and that we shall never begin to grasp the shining ideal which has animated and sustained so many generations, until we at-

tain to a childlike docility of mind in regard to divine things. The only mistake on the subject is, that many of these persons suppose that the end desired is to be attained by a social retrogression instead of advance, or by reorganizing the old ecclesiasticism instead of utterly abandoning it for a more spiritual conception of the church. When the Lord came to fulful the promise of the earthly Jerusalem, he did not proceed to do so by reorganizing that carnal economy, or infusing new life and sacredness into its crumbling walls, but by turning away the attention of his followers to a new and spiritual house, which should eventually come down from God out of heaven, and gather in its ample bosom all the true flock of the Divine Shepherd. So also, in the resurrection, we do not find that a man is raised in that material body which had been buried, and long since undergone resolution into its component earths and gases, but in a new and spiritual and therefore incorruptible body, befitting his enlarged soul. Accordingly, now while we are looking for a resurrection of the church, and looking for it too with entire confidence, we have no right whatever to expect it in any formal guise, or as the redintegration of any existing ecclesiastical interests, but only in a spiritual guise, or as that divine spirit of charity which is common to all the churches, and gives to all their solid and sole hold upon public respect. One would gladly realize all the poetic comfort contained in the charming phrase, "*Mother* Church." But surely we do this best, not by degrading the church into a wrinkled old crone, for ever looking back to the conquests and coquetries of her youth, and mourning over the joys that are gone, but only by exalting her into

"the ever young and ever fair" reality which that blessed symbol paints. The word "mother" suggests to the imagination all that is most unselfish, most uncomplaining, and most beneficent, in human nature. The mother forgets herself and her own interests utterly in zeal for the welfare of her children. She finds her best happiness in developing their affections and nascent sensibility, in being totally spent for them, instead of binding them to her service. She is lost in the love of her offspring, and is never unhappy so long as their bosoms overflow with contentment. She willingly leaves their discipline and correction and their intellectual growth to the father, and is wholly blest in quickening their affections and laying a foundation for enduring happiness. Of course, no possible ecclesiasticism can fulfil the bursting promise of this symbol. It is only the true or spiritual church, the church which exists under all ecclesiastical disguises, and becomes visible only in the good of life, that can pretend for a moment to do so. Were the church utterly divorced in the popular estimation from the ecclesiastical pretension, were it once fairly elevated to the spiritual conception, the days of its true glory would instantly begin, never more to end. Then for the first time we should know the blissful meaning of the phrase "*Mother* Church," because we should then find a mother whose interests were inseparably one with the most various and advanced culture of her offspring, and whose total spirit, therefore, was one of mutual love and tolerance.

The recent accessions in this country and England to the Romish church from other communions, do not indicate, as is sometimes foolishly said, any revival of

vigor within that church. They simply indicate a fastidious individual reaction here and there against the spirit of the age, a spirit which is daily leaving that church higher and dryer upon the sands of popular neglect, and exposing it to the inevitable fate that awaits all purely parasitic life. The Catholic church exists now in the condition of a mere *scabies* upon the life of the nations, or the body politic, and can no more become again incorporate with that life, than a *scabies* thrown off from the natural body can again become incorporate with it. The homage it receives from individuals here and there in other communions, is no doubt soothing to its pride; but this homage communicates no strength to it, being expressive in fact only of utter weakness on the part of the giver, or utter inability to keep pace with the inflowing life of God into the nations. Suppose all the imbecile and recusant life of Christendom should take refuge in the Romish communion, as it very probably may, would that church be any the stronger, or only the weaker for the infusion? The larger the army, if cowardice and poltroonery be its spirit, the surer its overthrow. There is nothing strong but innocence, which is charity, and charity does not vaunt itself, does not puff itself up, does not behave itself unseemly, nor prompt its subject to thrust himself upon a public which is tired of him. When one is no longer of use but to oneself, he had better die and be forgotten, as every homage he receives after that event, being offered to the memory of his old renown, is inwardly a present rebuke. Had Louis Philippe come over to this country after his fall from power, he would have received from the individual courtesy of our people the most lavish personal consid-

eration. They would have dined him and supped him, and caressed and flattered him out of all measure: they would have felt, indeed, a cordial sympathy with his heavy losses, and many individuals, no doubt, would have avowed a sharp and bitter disgust at the upstart and protestant influences which overthrew him. But would Louis Philippe, think you, have been senseless enough to imagine that all this patronage of his fallen majesty *promised to reinstate him?* I fancy not. A king in rags is a splendid bait for a luxurious benevolence, and a man of Louis Philippe's knowledge of the world would have understood the case at a glance. Let the Catholic church take a lesson from the illustration. It is seldom so splendid a mendicant knocks at the door of our ecclesiastic sympathies, and the scarlet and queenly memories she trails in the dust furnish an irresistible lure to our sensuous pity. But for this very reason she is apt to get herself patronized by the least instructed and most wilful tempers in Protestantism, mere wanton Quixotes, who, in their zeal for reaction, would place man's eyes in the back of his head, and who look upon windmills, and good honest mutton, and all the other insignia of man's progressive industry, as inventions of the devil to rob the past of its glory. Can this sort of patronage be any thing else than degrading to its object? In fact, does not all patronage imply that its object is below its subject? But this is a digression.—

No, the American church, the only church which is at all congruous with the genius of our polity, is not a new ecclesiastical form, but a new spirit breathed, if they will allow, into the old forms. It can have no *formal* quarrel, of course, with the old churches, because

these formal ecclesiastical differences are exactly commensurate with the needs of its own spiritual unity. It has no purely formal interests of its own, because, being exclusively a spiritual economy, and therefore identical with charity or brotherly love in the universal soul of man, it equally authenticates every form, Pagan and Christian, Jewish and Mohammedan, which admits of this spirit in its votary. Every nation must possess a church, or a spiritual substance into which the life of heaven may flow; because it is evident that the merely political life of the nations is subordinate to an interior or higher life,—is in fact but the carnal covering or clothing of that life, and hence disclaims all *immediate* contiguity with the Divine. But if every nation must have a church or spiritual substance, as every body must have a soul, it follows also that this church or spiritual substance must be fully commensurate with its political form. Thus the church in these United States must disown every organization which falls short of our political proportions. Its doors must be, at the very least, as wide as the doors of our political house; otherwise we shall exhibit the disreputable picture of a body larger than its soul, or a church less celestial than its corresponding State. As our political dimensions make us a city of refuge for all the materially oppressed of the earth, so our ecclesiastical dimensions must make us a city of refuge for all the spiritually oppressed. Politically we overlook the native differences of our refugees, absorbing them all alike into our own higher nationality. And of course, therefore, ecclesiastically we can show no partiality, nor recognize any of the existing churches as authentic, but must elevate them all alike to a higher spiritual level or unity.

Thus we shall at last hail the introduction of a new and eternal morality. The present ecclesiastical morality, were there any life remaining in it, would be sheerly detestable. The Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Jew, the New-churchman, the Baptist, the Mohammedan, the Mormon, fancies that no one is secure of the Divine complacency out of the pale of his own creed, and expects accordingly a heaven which shall inspire harps of only one string. In so far as this man is a consistent or strict ecclesiastic, he necessarily regards all men as good who belong to his own communion, and all men as evil who reject it. For, of course, no one supposes that God saves any but good men, or condemns any but bad ones. It is very true that few ecclesiastics are logical enough to go to this unhandsome extreme, for, as I said before, the old ecclesiastic morality is nearly lifeless, exhibiting only an occasional expiring flicker in some heartless theologic adventurer, or mere odious residuum of ignorance and insolence in the shape of certain Catholic newspapers. But this unhandsome extreme is nevertheless logically inherent in the very heart of the sectarian theory. The consistent Catholic, or the consistent New-churchman, necessarily supposes every one liable to the Divine wrath, who intelligently refuses to become identified with their ecclesiastical interests; otherwise they would deny to those interests all Divine sanction. And hence, as I said before, inasmuch as no one can suppose God to approve any but good men, or condemn any but bad ones, the consistent ecclesiastic or man of the past church, whatever name he assumes, makes the distinction of good and evil to attach to men only as they stand related, positively or negatively, to his own pigmy pretensions.

The true or spiritual church pronounces this morality untenable, and affirms the distinction of good and evil henceforth among men, not as they stand related to any ecclesiasticism under heaven, but only as they stand related to the spirit of God, the spirit of brotherly love or charity. A man shall have whatsoever ecclesiastical ties he pleases : he may be Catholic or Protestant, Christian or Mohammedan, and call himself after the old or the new Jerusalem, as suits his fancy : and no one spiritually enlightened will deem him so far either good or evil. For he who is spiritually enlightened, he who is of the Lord's new and living church, knows that no good or evil is predicable in the Divine sight, save of the presence or absence of charity in the soul. He who loves his neighbor as he loves himself, is a good man in God's sight, whether he be Turk or Christian ecclesiastically, and will go, as fast as his expansive lungs permit, to the heaven of good men. He who loves himself more than he loves his neighbor, is a bad man in God's sight, whether he be dubbed ecclesiastically Pope or Rabbi, and unless he repent, will infallibly go to the heaven of bad men.

Such is the temper and such the eternal morality of the true or spiritual church, the only church which possesses political basis and ratification in these United States. Our political constitution excludes all purely formal churches, every church that is visibly different from others, from its recognition, and so authenticates only an inward church, or a church which stands in the spirit of charity or brotherly love, and which may exist therefore under the most opposite ecclesiastical forms. The vegetable or animal spirit of the world expresses

itself in very various shapes, here in the shape of a cabbage, and there in the shape of a peach; here in the form of a donkey, and there in the form of a horse. But the spirit is one under all these varied manifestations, namely a spirit of love and accommodation to all man's varied material uses. So the religious spirit in humanity may beget here a Papacy, and there a Presbytery, or an Episcopacy, without any necessary compromise of its own unity. It is a spirit of love and accommodation to all man's varied intellectual uses, and hence not only tolerates but exacts every various and even eccentric formal manifestation. He who quarrels with this largeness of the world's spiritual administration, he who would have its religious Providence authenticate only some special form, some narrow Rome or narrower Jerusalem, must at some period or other of his spiritual pilgrimage, quarrel with nature's largeness also, and find his diet made up perhaps of unmitigated cabbage, and his empire restricted to unmitigated donkey. Who can tell to what smallness one may decline, that obstinately renders himself insubmissive to the Divine Providence which governs the world? Nature is but the servant of the soul, and will not always transcend the soul's demands therefore, in the services she renders.

The new church then, or the church of the American latitudes, is as it were a spiritual Ark, rising high above the waters of oblivion which are fast covering the ecclesiastical eminences of the old world, and opening its hospitable doors to every element which can add life and vigor and beauty to the manhood of a regenerate era. It legitimates every existing ecclesiastical form which the spirit of charity legitimates, that is to say,

every form which is compatible with the existence of brotherly love in its subject, and so elevates the religious life to a higher platform than it has yet known. Thus far, then, in all outward respects our ecclesiastical development amounts to a disorganization or solution of the things that have gone before: what our subsequent crystallization will be as to the mere forms of worship, I am not able to predict. Of one thing I am profoundly and joyously certain, namely, that the glory of God's former house will be utterly eclipsed in the more spiritual splendor of that which is coming. This will be true, doubtless, even of its sensuous things, or its programme of social worship. Its divine spirit will breathe new sacredness and sweetness even into the established ritual, and new forms vivid with the beauty of charity will be begotten adequate to every new want. But the distinctive fact of the church is not an improved Sunday worship, or a new holiday apparatus, but exclusively an improved daily life. The saint of the new church will not be the man who prays the most, and builds the most hospitals and churches, and undergoes the most self-sacrifice of any kind; for eminence in these things is almost sure to beget pride, or a sense of superior merit, in the votary: but the man who cheerfully abounds in social uses, who diligently pursues his lawful calling, who trains his children to noble and patient labors, who dodges no juries and shirks no political responsibility, but manfully confronts every duty, aspiring with his whole heart to be worthy of the great and beautiful society in which God has placed him. The most vernacular and intelligible expression for God's own perfection is USE, and the divinest form of man consequently is that

which he derives, not from his father and mother, for this does not endure, but from his own frank and cordial and complete adjustment of himself to the various uses, domestic, civil, and religious, which society devolves upon him. This is man's spiritual form, and it endures to all eternity, growing evermore instinct with God's own power, and this is the form to which alone the true church has respect in man. The new church life therefore will begin *from* God as well as tend *to* God. Under the old and typical creation represented by Moses, religion was not life, but a something superinduced upon life; it was a solace under trial, a refreshment after toil, and stood embodied in Sabbatical observances. The Sabbath, or day of divine rest, ended the week, shedding the dews of its consolation upon the heads and hearts which the previous six days' toil had bruised and wearied. But the new and true creation in Christ Jesus reverses this process. It identifies religion with life, inspiring man to labor, not with any hope of winning the Divine favor, but with the confidence of its present and inalienable possession. Hence Christianity discards the Sabbath, or day of refreshment *after* six previous days of toil, and substitutes the *first* day of the week as the Lord's Day; thus signifying that under the new and final economy man will work no longer to life but only from it, no longer with a servile but only with a filial spirit, or that all his secular activity is henceforth to be baptized with the temper and blessing of heaven.

I remain,

Yours, etc. etc.

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